

## Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 TUNIS 00791 020757Z  
ACTION MMO-04

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-----000775 022206Z /64

R 011556Z FEB 78  
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS  
TO USDOC WASHDC  
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 9813  
AMEMBASSY ATHENS

UNCLAS TUNIS 0791

ATHENS FOR RTDO

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: ECRP, BEXP, TS  
SUBJ: NEW TUNISIAN INTERNATIONAL FAIR GROUNDS

REF: 77 TUNIS 9200

1. EMBASSY COMMERCIAL OFFICER AND SENIOR COMMERCIAL SPECIALIST RECENTLY CALLED ON MAHMOUD YOUSSEF BASSOUM, DIRECTOR OF TUNIS INTERNATIONAL FAIR COMMITTEE, IN RESPONSE TO HIS JANUARY 9, 1978 LETTER AND QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO ALL PREVIOUS FAIR PARTICIPANTS. LETTER HAD STATED THAT FAIR COMMITTEE WAS IN PROCESS OF PREPARING TECHNICAL STUDIES PRIOR TO CONSTRUCTION OF NEW FAIR GROUNDS AND SOUGHT TO ASCERTAIN (A) IF USG WAS INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN FUTURE FAIRS; AND (B) APPROXIMATELY HOW MUCH FLOOR SPACE WOULD BE NEEDED.

2. BASSOUM SAID NEW FAIR GROUNDS WOULD BE NEAR TUNIS-CARTHAGE AIRPORT AND FAIR COMMITTEE WAS IN PROCESS OF SEEKING FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM VARIOUS POTENTIAL DONORS (UNDP, WOLD BANK, ETC). HOWEVER, FINANCING FOR NEW GROUNDS WAS FAR FROM COMPLETE. BASSOUM SAID PLANS NOW CALL FOR CONSTRUCTION OF ONE LARGE EXHIBITION HALL, BUT THAT FINAL DECISIONS WERE STILL FAR OFF; NEW GROUNDS WOULD NOT BE READY UNTIL 1980 OR 1981.

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 TUNIS 00791 020757Z

3. ASKED WHETHER USG WOULD BE INTERESTED IN SEPARATE OR SHARED EXHIBITION HALL, WE SAID USG AGENCIES GENERALLY PREFER TO RENT SPACE IN LARGE HALL ON AD HOC BASIS, EXPANDING OR CONTRACTING SPACE LEASED AS OUR NEEDS VARY. BASSOUM SAID HE BELIEVED THIS APPROACH CONSISTENT WITH FAIR COMMITTEE'S OWN THINKING.

4. COMMERCIAL SPECIALIST BEN MILED BROUGHT UP IMPORT LICENSE PROBLEM ENCOUNTERED AFTER LAST (1975) FAIR. GOT HAD "PROMISED" LICENSES TO PERMIT LOCAL SALE OF GOODS ON DISPLAY, THEN TOOK UP TO TWO YEARS TO ISSUE LICENSES. (IN SOME CASES, LICENSES WERE NOT ISSUED AT ALL.) BASSOUM SAID HE KNEW NOTHING OF THIS PROBLEM, WHICH HE SAID WAS IN REALM OF MINISTRY OF COMMERCE. WE EMPHASIZED THAT IF COMMITTEE WANTED TO HAVE A TRADE FAIR WITH USG PARTICIPATING, IT WOULD BE UP TO ORGANIZERS TO SET UP COMMITTEE THAT INCLUDED BOTH FAIR MANAGEMENT AND IMPORT LICENSING OFFICIALS OF COMMERCE MINISTRY TO INSURE THAT PROBLEM DID NOT REOCCUR. BASSOUM SAID HE WOULD BEAR THIS IN MIND.

5. WE DO NOT FORESEE TUNIS FAIR BEING HELD BEFORE 1980 OR 1981, AND WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED TO SEE IT SLIP WELL BEYOND THAT. NEVERTHELESS, WE REQUEST COMMERCE PROVIDE US WITH PRELIMINARY GUIDANCE AS TO AVERAGE FLOOR SPACE USG MWGHT EXPECT TO LEASE AT FUTURE FAIRS. QUESTIONNAIRE SPECIFICALLY ASKED FOR ESTIMATES IN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING RANGES: (A) LESS THAN 100 SQUARE METERS, (B) 200-400 SQUARE METERS, OR (C) OVER 400 SQUARE METERS. BASSOUM SAID HE REALIZED THIS FIGURE WOULD ONLY BE ROUGH ESTIMATE AND USG WOULD IN NO SENSE BE LIMITED, OR COMMITTED, TO LEASE THAT SPACE.

6. WE TAKE IT FROM PREVIOUS CONVERSATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS WITH DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE THAT, IN PRINCIPLE, USG WOULD BE PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN FUTURE (BIENNIAL) TNIS FAIRS.  
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PAGE 03 TUNIS 00791 020757Z

PLEASE ADVISE IF THIS IS NOT THE CASE.  
MULCAHY

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## Message Attributes

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